

highest civil office the prætorship, at the time when the distant and weak Count of Constantinople could or would do little more to protect the Romans against internal anarchy, and external conquest at the hands of the Lombards than give them such a head as the son of the senator Gordian. Even then Gregory was a frequent visitant at Monte Cassino and Subiaco, and he had the example of the saints of his family, three aunts, Fersilla, Gordiana and Æmiliana, as well as of his own mother, after his father had left the world to be ordained deacon, for that retirement into the peaceful shades of the cloister on which his heart was set. When he was taken from his monastery by the Pope and made one of the deacons of the church, and afterwards, during his seven years' residence at Constantinople as what we should call Nuncio of the Holy See, it was against his will that he was occupied in external business, however important, and we find him complaining in the preface to his *Morals*—which were begun at Constantinople—of the disturbance to his peace. He tells Leander of Seville, who was at Constantinople at the same time about the affairs of Spain, that his consolation and support was in the company of some of his monks of St. Andrew's who had come with him to the Imperial Court and with whom he was able to find time for study, reading and pious conversation. When after Pelagius II had died on the 8th of February 590 of a contagious disease, Gregory was elected to succeed him, he could not be prevailed upon to assume the responsible charge. The censure passed by the Bishop of Ravenna upon his flight after his election gave occasion to his beautiful defence in the famous Pastoral, which King Alfred translated into English, and which will always be a text for the formation of members of the ecclesiastical hierarchy.

He was consecrated in the church of St. Peter, on the 3rd of September, 590. Few, even of the most anti-christian historians, have failed to acknowledge the true